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TWO

SERMONS,

DELIVERED

AT EPSOM, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

ON THE DAY APPOINTED

FOR THE ANNUAL STATE FAST,

AND

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING

FOR PEACE,

APRIL 13, 1815.

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Forenoon Sermon.

ISAIAH LVIII. 6.

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness?

HERE is presented a description of sincere, acceptable, and profitable fasting. In verses preceding the text, the prophet deals in severe reproof with those, who fasted only in an outward, vain, and hypocritical manner. He would teach the people, that merely a formal observance of a day of fasting would neither please the Lord, nor profit themselves. It is evident from the manner of the prophet's reproof, that those, whom he was particularly addressing, were scrupulously exact in observing all the ostensible forms of fasting and penitence, while their hearts remained unaffected by all their services. "Behold," says he, "ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high." That is, Do not vainly imagine, that, without sincerity, the most boisterous sound of words will gain the ear of the holy and omniscient Majesty of heaven. He cannot be deceived. He is perfectly acquainted with every secret desire of the soul. His attention can never be attracted by an empty sound from a thoughtless tongue. He will hear the prayer only of the

contrite and humble ſpirit. "Is it ſuch a faſt that I have choſen? a day for a man to afflict his ſoul?" Is it a day for a man ſuperſtitiouſly to bring pain upon his body? or to feel a ſorrow merely becauſe he is expoſed to puniſhment, and not primarily becauſe he is a ſinful creature? "Is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him?" Is it a day on which to pay a ſanctimonious obſervance to merely outward ceremonies? "Wilt thou call this a faſt, and an acceptable day to the Lord?" Then follows the text, which particularly deſcribes in its connection the true deſign of acceptable faſting. "Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh?"

The meaning of the phraſe, "To looſe the bands of wickedneſs," is very evidently the ſame, as confeſſing and forſaking ſin. This meaning is preſented in the text with ſufficient clearneſs without a more particular comment.

Such then appears to be the connection of the words ſelected, and ſuch their meaning. They ſeem evidently ſuited to lead us to a more extenſive conſideration of the object of genuine, profitable faſting.

In order to derive the greateſt profit from the general doctrine of the text by viewing it in as

clear light as poſſible, let it receive our attention under the two following diviſions.

I. AVAILABLE FASTING IMPLIES THE CONFESSION AND REJECTION OF SIN; AND,

II. SUCH IS THE FASTING, THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN; OR SUCH AS WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.

I. AVAILABLE FASTING IMPLIES THE CONFESSION AND REJECTION OF SIN.

If we deſire to faſt in a manner, which will be acceptable to God and profitable to ourſelves, we ſhould be careful to diſtinguiſh between that faſting, which the word properly ſignifies, viz., merely an abſtinence from food, and thoſe penitent exerciſes of the ſoul, which ſhould always be kept in view as the principal object. Too much caution can hardly be uſed, leſt we vainly imagine, that, by ceaſing from labor and abſtaining from food, we do all, which the deſign of a day of faſting requires. But doing no more than this is doing nothing to any good purpoſe. All this we might obſerve, and ſtill be fit ſubjects of the ancient reproof, "Ye ſhall not faſt as ye do this day."

In purſuing the general deſign propoſed, let our attention be directed,

1. *To the importance of the CONFESSION of sin.*

In order to obſerve that ſpiritual faſting, which alone can honor God or profit men, ſin muſt be penitently confeſſed before Him, who alone has power to grant forgiveneſs.

But how ſhall we properly confeſs our ſins before the Lord, unleſs we feel our criminality? Without this, it cannot be done. Neither offences againſt God nor man will be confeſſed, while their author feels no conſciouſneſs of blame. Suppoſe a man to have injured his neighbor in ſome manner, and in a manner very manifeſt to all but himſelf; and ſtill, if he himſelf remain confident, that he has not injured his neighbor in deed, nor even in thought, he feels himſelf but poorly fitted to acknowledge faults, aſk forgiveneſs, and make ſatisfaction. This he cannot be expected to do. Neither will any one be led to the confeſſion of ſins to Him, againſt whom all ſin is committed, unleſs he have a conſciouſneſs of having committed ſins;—unleſs he have a ſenſe of guilt. Mankind are much too little prone to make an ingenuous confeſſion of their faults, when they ſee them; and much leſs diſpoſed are they to confeſs faults, whoſe exiſtence they deny. In approaching God then in order to confeſs our ſins, the firſt ſtep muſt be taken with a realizing ſenſe of criminality. There are doubtleſs many, who do not view their own hearts as awfully polluted with ſin. Many appear not to feel the force of the ſacred truth, that "the heart," the unſanctified heart, "is deſperately wicked." Nor do many realize, that it "is deceitful above all things," and inclined to conceal its wickedneſs from its own view;—inclined to deceive both itſelf and others. And particularly are theſe remarks applicable to many, whoſe manner of life, in the view of men, has been unexceptionable. Many, becauſe they have been upright and honorable in their tranſactions with their fellow-men, and have

maintained the character of good citizens,—are too apt to imagine, that they have, therefore, been juſt in their conduct towards the Almighty, and, that he views them as blameleſs characters. Too often is it the caſe, that mankind fancy the Almighty to be altogether ſuch an one as themſelves; that, like themſelves, he determines the character from outward appearances. But it ſhould ever be remembered, that, while "man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart." He judges from the ſecret feelings of the ſoul;—feelings unknown to all but Omniſcience himſelf.

But, if any are deſirous of ſeeing the true ſtate of their hearts, no method will be ſo effectual, as comparing their feelings with the equitable, the perfect law of God. It is by this law, that ſin is made to appear "exceeding ſinful." By comparing ourſelves by the divine requirements, all of which are perfectly reaſonable, we may at once ſee how far ſhort we have fallen of rendering them their due obedience. The holy law commands us to love the Lord with all our heart. This reaſonable command, we ſhould remember, "is exceeding broad." It requires us continually to regard Jehovah with the pureſt and higheſt love;—to eſteem him far above all created good. While conſidering the extent of this requirement, it becomes us to inquire of ourſelves, whether we have not, in many inſtances, violated ſome other of the divine commands beſide the firſt. For, if any other command has been broken, it is a certain evidence, that the firſt has not been obſerved according to its true meaning. To love God with all the heart requires our higheſt regard

for his character during the whole period of our exiſtence. If, therefore, any one of the commands of God be violated, it ſhows at-once, that guilt is likewiſe incurred from a breach of the firſt and great command. For it is impoſſible, that God ſhould be regarded with feelings of holy love, and, at the ſame time, that any of his commands, by the ſame perſon, ſhould be violated. The ſuppoſition preſents a groſs abſurdity.—By the ſtrict and holy law of God, let our characters be compared. And, on this day, ſet apart by public authority agreeably to the highly proper cuſtom of our pious anceſtors "for public faſting, humiliation, and prayer," let us all endeavor to feel intereſted in the deſign of the day. Let us diligently and prayerfully examine our paſt lives, and eſpecially during the laſt year; and be willing to ſee without diſguiſe the true, though frightful catalogue of our ſins. Let us not ſhrink from the inquiry, however painful; for now is the time to profit from it. God moſt certainly views our hearts as they are, whether we are willing thus to view them or not. Let the life be carefully examined, and compared with that perfect law, which we have been conſidering. This is the only true method, by which to determine the weight of guilt impending over every offender againſt God.—Let each one inquire thus of himſelf. In the firſt place, have I ever loved God with all my heart? Have I been invariably actuated during my whole life by a regard for his glory? For, if this has not been the caſe, I have fallen criminally ſhort of my duty. Every one is certainly accountable for the influence, which he bears in ſociety. And has all my influence,

whether ſmall or great, been devoted to God? Has it been employed in a manner, and in the beſt manner poſſible for me to uſe it, to increaſe the proſperity of religion? Might I have made any more exertions, the probable conſequence of which would have been the increaſe of the intereſt of the Redeemer in the world? Have I invariably maintained ſuch conduct towards my fellow-men, as, upon rational and chriſtian principles, I ought to expect from them? In a word, have I invariably obeyed all the divine commands?—Where is the individual, who dares affirm, all this I have done? It is preſumed, ſuch an one cannot be found. Great then is the weight of guilt hanging on every ſoul.—But inquiry ſhould not ſtop here. Mankind are naturally diſpoſed not merely to neglect thoſe things, which they ought to do; but to do thoſe things, which they ought not. And, on this ſide, let the inquiry be extended. Have I never, in any manner, cheriſhed an evil diſpoſition towards any of my fellow-creatures? Further than this,—have I never *actually injured* any one by ſlander, by fraud, by theft, or in ſome other manner? Have I never perverted the object of my exiſtence by intemperance? Have I never ſpoken lightly or contemptuouſly of the ſacred truths of the Bible, or of the cauſe of religion? Have I never, in any manner, profaned the holy Sabbath of reſt? Have I never thoughtleſsly and blaſphemouſly uſed the name of the holy God of heaven?—— Will not faithful conſcience conſtrain many to acknowledge, that ſome, or all theſe ſins are theirs? But, on this point, why need I dwell?

Can the perſon be found, who, after faithfully ſearching his own heart and comparing it with the Word of unerring truth, would not acknowledge himſelf a great ſinner? Reflection, it would ſeem, could hardly fail to lead every one to feel the grievous weight of guilt hanging upon his own ſoul, and for which he muſt anſwer before the Judge of all the earth. Where can the perſon be found, who is not guilty to a great degree of the ſin of ingratitude? Who can enumerate the favors of an indulgent Providence, of which he is made the conſtant partaker? How criminally ſhort of duty do the moſt pious fall in often forgetting the kind hand, which leads and ſuſtains them! The bleſſings of Heaven flow on every ſide. Often we receive them in an unexpected and ſurpriſing manner. But O, how ſeldom do they cauſe due gratitude to the Giver! Who can ſay, that he has not been very criminally ungrateful for the many good things, which God has kindly beſtowed? Whoſe gratitude has ariſen equal to the favors, which God has granted individuals, communities, our country, and the world? Who is not guilty of long abuſing the mercy of God? even the mercy preſented by the condeſcending overtures of the Goſpel? And are there not many, who even now, after ſo long a time, are refuſing to hear the voice of mercy, and are continuing to harden their hearts?—But perhaps enough has been ſaid upon the numerous ways, in which ſin may be incurred. Could we ſee our hearts as they are, how contaminated with ſin muſt they appear!

But it is by no means ſufficient, that the underſtanding be convinced of the ſinfulneſs of the

heart. A perſon may be conſtrained to acknowledge himſelf a great ſinner without being at-all affected with his ſituation;—without feeling the leaſt degree of penitence. This leads me to obſerve, that, in order for a perſon rightly to confeſs his ſins before an offended God, he muſt feel ſorrowful, humble, penitent in view of them. And the ſole ground of his ſorrow ſhould be, not becauſe he has expoſed himſelf to miſery; but becauſe he has diſobeyed and offended a holy God;—becauſe he has done evil. A ſoul with theſe views of ſin is then prepared to approach the mercy-ſeat with a confeſſion of ſincerity, and thankfully to receive forgiveneſs. Only the ſoul, that ſees the odious nature of ſin, exerciſes an abhorrence towards it, and feels its burden, is prepared to make ſuch a confeſſion before the Lord, as he will be pleaſed in mercy to hear.

That it is our duty humbly and penitently to confeſs our ſins before the Lord, we are frequently taught in the Scriptures. This is inculcated by Joſhua's direction to Achan. "Joſhua ſaid unto Achan, My ſon, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Iſrael, and make confeſſion unto him." The Iſraelites are thus exhorted. "Now, therefore, make confeſſion unto the Lord God of your fathers." In another place, the declaration of the Almighty is, "I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence and ſeek my face." We are preſented in the Scriptures with many examples of the confeſſion of both private and public ſins. "How many," ſaith Job, "are mine iniquities and ſins? Make me to know my tranſgreſſion and my ſin." Again, "Behold, I am vile; what ſhall I an-

ſwer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." The Pſalmiſt of Iſrael ſays, "I will declare mine iniquity, I will be ſorry for my ſin." Again, "I acknowledged my ſin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I ſaid, I will confeſs my tranſgreſſions unto the Lord; and thou forgaveſt the iniquity of my ſin, I acknowledge my tranſgreſſions; and my ſin is ever before me." —Many are alſo the examples of the confeſſion of public ſins. The pious Ezra, in prayer, confeſſes the ſin of his people. "O my God, I am aſhamed and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increaſed over our head, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the heavens." Of the propriety and importance of confeſſing public ſins in faſting, Nehemiah has given us an impreſſive example. Hear his own account of his conduct, after he was informed of the affliction and reproach of his people and the ruin of the beautiful city of Jeruſalem. "And it came to paſs, when I heard theſe words, that I ſat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and faſted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and ſaid, I beſeech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him, and obſerve his commandments; let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayeſt hear the prayer of thy ſervant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Iſrael thy ſervants, and confeſs the ſins of the children of Iſrael, which we have ſinned againſt thee: both I and my father's houſe have ſinned. We have dealt very corruptly againſt thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the ſtat-

utes, nor the judgments, which thou commandeſt thy ſervant Moſes."

But not only does true faſting imply the *confeſſion* of ſin; but,

2. *The* REJECTION *or* FORSAKING *of it.*

It is impoſſible, that a perſon ſhould penitently confeſs his ſins before God, that is, with a temper abhorrent from ſin, and, that ſin, at the ſame time, ſhould be his delight. The forſaking of ſin is therefore neceſſarily connected with a penitent, a cordial confeſſion of it. Renouncing ſin merely becauſe it is wrong, or out of true love and obedience to God, is one of the ſureſt evidences, that the heart has been prepared ſincerely and penitently to confeſs it. That forſaking ſin ſhould ever be connected with the main deſign of faſting is evident as well from reaſon, as from Revelation. Reaſon plainly teaches us, that wickedneſs ſhould be forſaken in order to expect forgiveneſs for the commiſſion of it. For how is it poſſible, that the heart ſhould be diſpleaſed and diſguſted with any object; and, at the ſame time, cheriſh and purſue that object? It cannot be poſſible. The ſuppoſition is contrary to the nature of man. That only the kind of faſting, which implies forſaking ſin, will be acceptable to God or profitable to men, is evident from the obvious meaning of the text. "Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs?" From the text and its connection, it is evident, that forſaking ſin generally, and particularly the ſin of oppreſſion, is the moſt prominent feature in the requirement. Often, in the Scriptures, is the rejection or forſaking of ſin inculcated. "He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper; but whoſo

confeſſeth and forſaketh them ſhall have mercy." "Forſake the fooliſh." "Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord."

We are now prepared to ſhow,

II. THAT SUCH IS THE FASTING, THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN; OR SUCH, AS WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.

This is a plain doctrine from the text. And elſewhere God has made many and gracious promiſes to a penitent confeſſion of ſin. "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and ſerve him only, he will deliver you. If thou return to the Almighty, thou ſhalt be built up. Return, thou backſliding Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, and I will not cauſe mine anger to fall upon you. Thus ſaith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil. If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs. Whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them [his ſins] ſhall have mercy." Speaking of rebellious Iſrael, the Lord has made the following merciful and encouraging promiſe. "If they ſhall confeſs their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their treſpaſs which they treſpaſſed againſt me, and that alſo they have walked contrary unto me;—if then their uncircumciſed hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the puniſhment of their iniquity: then

will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and alſo my covenant with Iſaac, and alſo my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land." To ſuch ſpiritual faſting, or true penitence as we have already deſcribed, God ſurely would never have made ſuch promiſes of favor as he has made, were it not acceptable to him.—Thus does it appear, that available faſting implies the confeſſion and rejection of ſin; and, that ſuch faſting is acceptable to God. And, as no other kind of faſting is any where authoriſed, we may juſtly conclude, that this is the *only* kind of faſting, which he will accept.

In cloſing this ſubject, let me, my hearers, moſt earneſtly entreat you not to conſider all intereſted in this ſubject but yourſelves. Make individually the moſt candid examination of your own hearts. Strive to view them, as they are viewed by an omniſcient God. See if you find not entwined around them the bands of wicked thoughts. Nay, ſee if they are not bound in ſins, that meet the public eye. It well becomes chriſtians, while they remember, that "there is no man that liveth and ſinneth not," ſtill to aim at entire freedom from the bands of wickedneſs. Well may they mourn, if ever they are bound for a moment to any forbidden object.—But are there not many, who have never yet been freed from complete confinement under the bonds of iniquity? Do any feel, that they have never known the enjoyment of the glorious liberty of the ſons of God? Do any feel their guilt to be a heavy burden? Then, where it is realized that ſin has thus abounded, let true repentance, faith, and

love, the fureſt marks of purifying grace, equally abound. Take with you words; and let your conſtant and fervent ſupplication be, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive."

Afternoon Sermon.

ISAIAH XLV. 7.

I make peace.

WERE chriſtian nations, after receiving any remarkable favor, to diſregard the hand of God; pious heathen, for we hope there are ſuch, would riſe in judgment againſt them. The great body of the pagan world have never been perſuaded, that the wiſeſt and beſt human exertions could not alone enſure proſperity. They have ever felt their dependance upon ſomething; but, upon what, they often found a difficulty in explaining. The moſt learned and rational of the heathen world, however, have generally ſuppoſed their dependance to be upon ſome being or beings of wiſdom and power ſuperior to man. The ancient Greeks and Romans, probably the moſt learned heathen nations, that ever exiſted, believed in the exiſtence of a family of deities; and a family much more extenſive too, than is maintained in the creed of any modern divines. They ſuppoſed, that different parts of the world and the various employments of men had each its ſuperintending deity. They likewiſe ſuppoſed, that all theſe were dependent deities, and all ſubject to one, who was ſupreme, and whom the Romans denominated Jupiter. But we have reaſon to

ſuppoſe it their general belief, that even Jupiter himſelf was not perfectly independent; but frequently under the control of what they termed the fates; probably underſtanding about the ſame by their term, as we do by the more familiar word chance. A deſcription of all the characters, offices, and relationſhip of their deities, and the abſurdities thence ariſing, would furniſh the contents for many volumes. But notwithſtanding all the abſurdities and deluſions of pagan nations; ſtill accounts of their grateful ſenſe of favors and apparent piety—often caſt reproach on conduct of nations, who glory in religion of a more conſiſtent form and purer tendency. Seldom would they undertake any important enterpriſe without imploring the aid of ſome deity. And ſeldom did they experience any remarkable interpoſition in their favor—without acknowledging their obligations and manifeſting their gratitude to ſome ſuperior power. Many inſtances occur, which prove their belief of ſome kind of a divine control over the affairs of men, and evince their grateful ſenſe of favors. Let one among many be given. —At a time, when the learned Cicero was conſul in the Roman republic, we are informed, that an extenſive conſpiracy was planned, the object of which was firſt to take the life of Cicero and of other diſtinguiſhed characters; to fire the city of Rome; and then ſeize on the government. Only on the evening before the time appointed for its execution, the whole conſpiracy was diſcloſed to Cicero through the information of a private individual, who happened to gain knowledge of it. Upon receiving intelligence of the contem-

plated deſign, Cicero immediately adopted ſuch efficient meaſures to guard himſelf and the city, that the conſpirators feared to commence their bloody work. The whole deſign proved abortive, and the city was ſaved. Now obſerve the conduct of this Cicero, who had nothing but the light of nature from which to learn his religion. Though he had himſelf diſplayed great wiſdom in his precautionary and defenſive arrangements; and though love of applauſe was perhaps his greateſt failing;—yet he appears convinced, that the preſervation of the city depended on ſomething deeply concealed from human foreſight. He immediately aſſembles the officers of government, and, after deſcribing in a moving and eloquent ſtyle the imminent danger, to which themſelves, their friends, and the city, had been expoſed, and alſo the means employed for the public ſafety;—he very earneſtly recommends a public decree of thankſgiving to Jupiter for the remarkable preſervation. Such a decree was accordingly paſſed, a careful obſervance of which he enjoins on the people univerſally.—And, if a ſignal preſervation of the Almighty among pagans could excite their thankfulneſs to their imaginary benefactor,—to a ſenſeleſs image;—ſhall we, after receiving by the interpoſition of that ſame Almighty Being ſo great a favor as peace with our enemies, and when, by light from Heaven, we may read our obligations to this Being;—ſhall we neglect to raiſe to him the warmeſt gratitude of our hearts? *Should* we neglect to do this, pagan nations not only; but the brutal world, and even inanimate creation would cry

out againſt us in the bittereſt reproaches. For even the ox knows his owner, and, if not treated with the cruelty of ſome maſters, will dumbly mean his gratitude for kindneſs. And can man, who calls his own rank among other beings exalted, forget thankfully to acknowledge the daily bleſſings, and eſpecially the ſignal bleſſings, which he receives from his Benefactor, his Preſerver, his Creator?—Were goodneſs neceſſarily connected with high rank and exalted abilities, this could not be the caſe. Were man diſpoſed to act a part becoming the eminence, on which he ſtands, he could not refrain from manifeſting his gratitude, his reverence and love to the great Fountain of every good.

In the higheſt degree proper then is it, when the welcome ſound of peace is again heard in our land, that we ſhould unitedly, publicly, and ſincerely expreſs our higheſt gratitude to that God, who has directed the event. For God has expreſsly informed us in the text, that he does make peace.

The words, ſelected for the direction of our thoughts, ſeem adapted to lead us to inquire,

I. In what manner God causes peace between nations; which will naturally lead us,

II. To an enumeration of the greatest advantages of the return of peace; and

III. To consider them an abundant cause of thanksgiving to God.

I. In what manner does God cause peace between nations?

He cauſes peace by giving a pacific diſpoſition to thoſe, who direct the public affairs of the nations contending. That God does direct the hearts of men is one of the plaineſt doctrines of the Bible. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whitherſoever he will." To the ſame effect it is ſaid, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the anſwer of the tongue is from the Lord." Theſe preparations of the heart to ſuit his wiſe deſigns he cauſes through the inſtrumentality of motives. The truth of this aſſertion is too evident both from reaſon and Revelation to need at this time a particular proof. When two nations have commenced hoſtilities, if God ſhould view them ripe for deſtruction, he might with the greateſt eaſe ſo balance their ſtrength, their ſucceſſes, and their intereſt, and, in this manner, ſo continue their hoſtile diſpoſition, that they would not leave the conteſt, till both were deſtroyed. But, when he ſees ſome greater good in view by ſparing them ſtill longer, he ſo orders events in his providence, that the contending nations find their intereſt in being reconciled to each other. We can eaſily conceive, that a ſingle victory on one ſide, and the conſequent defeat on the other—might ſo operate on both ſides as to be a ſufficient motive for the ceſſation of hoſtilities, and an amicable ſettlement of every ſubject of contention. And, in methods innumerable, and often unſeen by mortals, by preſenting ſufficient motives in the arrangement of his providence, God often compoſes enraged and contending nations to peace.

Thus is he always the real, primary cauſe, whenever peace is eſtabliſhed.

We are now led,

III. To an enumeration of the greatest advantages of the return of peace. And,

1. *Peace announces the ceſſation of a great loſs and expenſe of property, which are always, to a greater or leſs degree, the conſequence of a ſtate of war.*

So long as our country continues its extenſive commercial purſuits, whenever it is engaged in a war, which endangers the immenſe property ſpread in times of peace over every ſea and ocean, ſevere loſſes both public and private muſt inevitably follow. Much muſt alſo be loſt through the want of employment for the mariner; much in the price of articles for exportation; and much in the decay of the veſſels deſigned to convey them. In other ways too numerous to be mentioned, muſt loſſes be experienced in time of war.

No war can be maintained for any conſiderable length of time, unleſs by remarkably prudent economy, withhout incurring an enormous expenſe. Armies and navies muſt be ſupported, and numerous meaſures of defence adopted. But peace brings with it the agreeable intelligence, that ſuch ſevere loſſes may no longer be expected; that ſuch extraordinary expenſes are no longer neceſſary.

2. *Peace announces the ceſſation of the extraordinary work of death, which is the invariable conſequence of a ſtate of war.*

During a ſtate of hoſtilities, great is the expoſure of the health and the life. Sickneſs in the camp and the ſword on the field vie with each other in the work of death. How deſtructive the ſoldier's diet and habits are to the health of thoſe, unaccuſtomed to a military life, experience has but too ſadly proved. By indolence at one time, and exceſſive fatigue at another; by the want of proper clothing and ſhelter from a northern atmoſphere; by increaſed vice at home, and crowded, noiſome priſons abroad; by other means ariſing from a ſtate of war, too numerous indeed to be diſtinctly mentioned, are thouſands ſuddenly called from life. Many lives, and often lives valuable to ſociety, and perhaps none without a mourner, muſt be untimely ended. The brave and valuable are often the moſt expoſed, and many loſſes of this kind, in a time of hoſtilities, a country muſt expect to ſuſtain. Hundreds, in one fatal hour, are often hurried thoughtleſs and unprepared into the eternal world. A ſolemn reflection to a pious mind! But peace gives us the joyful information, that ſuch ſcenes of untimely death are ended.—And this leads me to obſerve again,

3. *That the arrival of peace removes from many a breast much painful anxiety.*

In many parts of our country, during the late war, and eſpecially in ſea-ports, painful indeed muſt have been the anxiety of thouſands for the ſafety of their property and their perſons. Frequent and diſtreſſing was the alarm excited in many places. Many were long compelled to conſider

the queſtion a doubtful one, whether another riſing ſun would diſcover their property in ruins, and themſelves in the hands of an enemy. Such a ſtate muſt be one of very painful anxiety.

Think how many thouſands are required to compoſe an army, or the armies of two contending nations, and are ſubjected to the expoſure of the dangers of war. And then think how many more thouſands, though not expoſed to immediate danger themſelves, are at home full of painful anxiety for the ſafety of their abſent friends. The ſound of every diſtant cannon pierces ſome tender mother's heart; and perhaps a meſſenger muſt ſoon inform her, that the father too was in the battle,—fought bravely,—but—was not made priſoner. How many anxiouſly watch every paſſing mail, every travelling ſtranger, to learn, whether a father, a brother, a ſon, a huſband—are priſoners in a diſtant land, among the ſlain, or ſtill alive with friends. During a period of war, how many, wakeful at the ſilent, midnight hour, view by imagination ſome abſent relative performing the ſentinel's duty with only an inclement ſky for his covering; and perhaps too, cautiouſly picking his way among the dead around him! Scenes like theſe are only the common ſcenes of war. And, when any have abſent friends thus expoſed, ſo long as humanity remains the ſame, they cannot refrain from anxiety. Painful is the anxiety endured for the return of friends, who have long been expoſed to the dangers of war. How anxious to ſee, whether they return with all their limbs, or have left a part in a diſtant land! How anxious to know, whether

ſevere wounds have impaired their reaſon! But many muſt wait the return of friends in vain. Many can never enjoy even the painful ſatisfaction of viewing the earth, that covers their lifeleſs clay. But the return of peace removes all that painful anxiety, which a ſtate of war unavoidably excites.

4. *The return of peace preſents our country with an opportunity of resuming numerous employments, which produce individual and national wealth and happiness.*

Numerous mechanical arts, peace will again bring into exerciſe. The ſhip-builder may again prepare his tools; the ſailor ſwing his pack and make for the water; the merchant bruſh his ſhelves, and expect ſome gain with every eaſtern breeze. Many productions of our fertile ſoil, which have long remained inactive in the ſtore-houſe, will now ſolicit many hands to diſtribute them to the nations of the world. Soon ſhall the trade winds again be wafting onward ſome American merchandiſe; and ſoon ſhall every tranſient breeze fill ſome American ſail. Again may the millions of China be greatly aſſiſted in the ſupport of life by our receiving their productions; and again may the American farmer feed the hungry European mechanic, and perhaps be well paid for his kindneſs. Other uſeful and profitable employments too numerous to be diſtinctly mentioned will again preſent themſelves to the hands of the laborer.

5. *Peace will have a tendency to diminish the prevalence of vice and immorality.*

The camp is always proverbial for wickedneſs of almoſt every deſcription. And the greater the number there taught the principles of vice, and the longer they there remain, the more extenſive and pernicious will be their example. In an army, where few reſtraints are impoſed; where much leiſure is afforded; and where are collected many characters of the vileſt ſtamp; ſchemes of wickedneſs are matured, and carried to ſuch an alarming degree, as to bear away all the bounds of morality, and even of common decency. If man is naturally inclined to evil, as the Scriptures teach, and experience and obſervation prove; what ſituation could be more deſtructive to the morals and the happineſs of all, and eſpecially of volatile youth, than a familiar acquaintance with ſuch examples? But the ceſſation of hoſtilities removes many a giddy youth from ſuch deſtructive ſcenes, and reſtores him to the ſalutary influence of more virtuous ſociety. Thouſands will the return of peace doubtleſs reſcue from the ſnares of ſatan and the gulf of ruin.

6. *Peace presents the prospect of the advancement of morality and religion.*

It gives thouſands, who had long been deprived of the privilege, an opportunity of reading the Scriptures, where they can do it without diſgrace and inſult; of regularly attending the public worſhip of God, and the ordinances of religion. It recalls them from the ſchool of vice,

from the daily and deſtructive influence of bad examples to the ſociety of thoſe, by whom morality of conduct is more generally conſidered an excellence.—Many, who have been much embarraſſed in their pecuniary circumſtances, will now feel an ability more extenſively to ſupport the inſtitutions, and aid the cauſe of religion. Much more abundant generally will be the means for promoting religion in our own, and in other countries. Many obſtructions in the way of ſending the Goſpel to the deſtitute abroad, by the return of peace, will be removed. In ways too numerous to be diſtinctly mentioned, will the cauſe of Chriſtianity receive additional ſtrength. —And, as another happy conſequence of the return of peace, may we not with much ſatisfaction likewiſe mention,

7. *The probable moderation of that violent party-spirit, which has so unhappily distracted our land?*

Now peace is reſtored to Europe* and to this country, except the war againſt the piratical Algerines, in which we all agree, what can remain, and what ſhall be allowed, to interrupt our political harmony? In the general principles of

* Since the above was written, Bonaparte has again arrived in France, and warlike measures are in operation in many parts of Europe. Should a diſtreſſing war enſue, we have much reaſon to believe, that the time of its continuance will be ſhort, and that Europe will ſoon again be bleſſed with a univerſal peace. But, whether a war be ſuffered long to diſtract the nations of Europe, or peace be ſoon eſtabliſhed, why need we be poiſoned with their politics? Why need we croſs the Atlantic to deſtroy ourſelves?

our form of government all agree. Why then ſhould animoſities ariſe about particular favorite men?—We ſurely have great reaſon to believe, and it becomes us to indulge the belief with much ſatisfaction and thankfulneſs, that the preſent ſituation of our own country and of Europe will be inſtrumental of removing in a great meaſure thoſe nominal political diſtinctions, which have heretofore created ſo much unhappineſs. What is there in our future proſpects, in which we may not be agreed? Why ſhould the well diſpoſed be led aſtray by the fictions of demagogues, and by a mere ſound of words? Let not the knowledge of a man's political name be conſidered the only prerequiſite in order to determine, whether he is qualified to hold a public office. For it is certain, that the general nominal diſtinctions uſed to deſignate the parties, that have exiſted, do not invariably mark the political creed of thoſe, to whom they have been applied. On many ſubjects, there is a material difference, which facts have proved, in the ſentiments of thoſe conſidered of the ſame party. But always let the firſt inquiry reſpecting a candidate for public office be this; *Does his life prove, that he is actuated by the true principles of Chriſtianity?* And then, *Does he poſſeſs other qualifications requiſite for the office?* If piety and ability can be found united, and we hope they can, no reaſon can be given, why theſe ſhould *not* direct our public intereſts; but many can be given, why they *ſhould*. If our happy Republic be deſtined to deſtruction, let it be deſtroyed by good men. But, under the direction of good men, it will endure the ſhock of

ages without alarm or injury. For their ſake it would long be ſpared.

But, if, upon certain ſubjects, there ſhould ſtill remain a difference in opinion, can any reaſon be given, why this difference ſhould interrupt the friendſhip and happineſs of ſociety? Certainly none. It becomes us ever to remember, that others have the ſame right to their opinions, that we have to ours. All have a civil right to believe what they pleaſe; but, when furniſhed with all neceſſary evidence, no moral right to believe any thing but truth. But, for the abuſe of the latter, we are not to account to civil authority; but to God, who judgeth the heart. Whenever politics is the ſubject of converſation, it is the duty of all ever to obſerve the ſame candor and moderation, which are neceſſary when converſing upon any of the other concerns of life. And to thoſe, who deſire to promote the peace and happineſs of ſociety, the obſervance of two, ſhort, and ſimple rules, may not be altogether unprofitable. Firſt, *Be sure never to advance any thing for truth, which is not well known and established as such;* and ſecondly, *Make a law with yourselves never to suffer passion to rise in the least degree.*—But the mention of every advantage reſulting from the return of peace need not be expected at the preſent time. What have been mentioned, if the moſt prominent and diſtinguiſhed, it is hoped, will lead the mind to the reſt.

It becomes the object of this day as well, as regard for the recommendation of the Preſident, while we make the bleſſing of peace the burden

of our ſong of praiſe, not to forget the former goodneſs of God towards our native land.—He guided and ſupported our fathers while ſeeking a retreat from oppreſſion. He taught the foreſt and the moſt ſtubborn ſavage to bow before them. He enabled the country in the days of its youth to maintain the rights of men. He gave us a Waſhington, the defender of freedom, the philanthropiſt, the chriſtian, the boaſt of his country. It was from the great Fountain, that wiſdom was received for the formation of a conſtitution of government, which, though doubtleſs imperfect, has long excited the envy and the admiration of the world.—In the late war, in which we have been engaged, he has remarkably preſerved the lives of our citizens, and bleſſed their exertions in defending our territory, the precious inheritance from our fathers.

All theſe favors may well lead us to our

III. SUBJECT OF CONSIDERATION, VIZ. THAT THEY ARE AN ABUNDANT CAUSE OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD.

We have ſeen, that he is the Author of peace with all its attendant bleſſings. We have ſeen how great are the advantages attending the welcome return of peace. Many of theſe have been mentioned. And even for which *one* of them could we refrain to manifeſt to God our thankfulneſs? Who would not conſider it a benefit to have the great expenſes ceaſe, which ariſe from a ſtate of war? Surely every one muſt conſider this alone as ſufficient cauſe for unfeigned gratitude.—

it certainly becomes all to rejoice at any event, which has a tendency to moderate that exceſſive political zeal, which has produced ſo much evil in our country.—Great indeed will the favor be eſteemed by our citizens univerſally, and eſpecially by many deſtitute ſufferers, that they are again permitted to reſume their accuſtomed occupations.—That our nation is again free from the painful anxiety of war; that its diſmal ſound is no longer heard; that we are relieved from diſtreſſing fear for the ſafety of our perſons, our property, our friends, and our country, is worthy of our grateful remembrance.—Moſt willing indeed ſhould be our thank-offering, that God has been pleaſed, by the return of peace, to lengthen out the lives of many of our countrymen. And a greater, far greater cauſe of thankſgiving is it ſtill, if, by this event, the prevalence of vice is diminiſhed, and morality and religion increaſed.—If each of the favors mentioned is worthy to excite our ſincere gratitude to him, who is the primary Author of peace; how great ſhould be our tribute of thankſgiving to him for all theſe favors united? For all theſe unmerited bleſſings let us enter his gates with thankſgiving, and his courts with praiſe. O praiſe the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth forever. Bleſs the Lord, O our ſouls.

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